

CONTRIBUTOR GUIDELINES

October 2010



ABOUT US

The Big Issue is an independent magazine that publishes informative and entertaining articles on a huge variety of subjects, including arts and entertainment, street culture, lifestyle and personal profiles. We are always looking for good-quality writers. *The Big Issue* is a not-for-profit organisation, set up to help people who have experienced homelessness, long-term unemployment, disability, displacement and other forms of social marginalisation. The magazine is sold for \$5, with \$2.50 going directly to the vendor.

PITCHING YOUR STORY IDEA

We accept unsolicited material, if it is polished and fits the tone and style of the magazine, is clearly targeted at a particular section of the magazine and falls within the word counts relevant to a particular section. (For example 750 words for 'My Word' submissions or 1800 for a four-page feature; see the attached 'Word Counts' document.)

Alternatively, writers can pitch story ideas by email first. To be considered, your pitch should explain which section of the magazine the story is intended for, be one paragraph long, contain a topic sentence, a sample introductory sentence and explain the story angle, writing tone, suggested word length, a list of possible interviewees (if appropriate) and whether or not photographs and/or illustrative material is available.

If your story is linked to a particular event (or date, or anniversary) you must pitch it at least two months before the event takes place. **Important note:** as a **national publication**, we are unlikely to accept stories that have a specifically local focus. If we like your idea, we will call or email you to discuss it further. Pitches should be emailed to editorial@bigissue.org.au.

WHAT WE LOOK FOR

We strongly recommend (in fact, expect) that you read *The Big Issue*, and have a good idea of the sorts of stories we like and the style of writing we prefer. Keep in mind that we are an independent publication and are thus able to do stories other magazines and papers might not be able to do.

As well as our core content (current affairs and weightier social issues), we're also interested in stories focused on street culture and quirky, humorous or unusual topics. What we are looking for is good writing that helps us put a human face on all the issues we cover. Whether you want to contribute satire, hard news, investigative journalism or light-hearted pieces, the most important thing is clear writing and a compelling human perspective. Serious topics need to be tackled in such a way as to keep the reader interested – we encourage first-person, experience based pieces; dry, fact-laden reportage, an over-reliance on comments by 'experts' and an overly earnest writing approach are to be avoided.

Please note that we do not publish poetry unless you fit the brief for 'Streetsheet' contributions (see below).

We'd encourage you not to be disheartened if your first ideas are not picked up; we don't commission a story unless we are confident that it would suit the magazine. When pitching stories for the first time, sending copies of your previously published work is a good idea. Be aware, too, that because we have a small editorial team it may be some time before we can respond to your submission. Please let us know if the piece has been submitted elsewhere.

We accept material for publication in *The Big Issue* on the basis that it has not already been published (whether online, in a hardcopy publication or in any other medium) and that it will be first published by *The Big Issue*. By submitting material, either unsolicited or commissioned by us, you represent that the material has not been previously published in any form anywhere in the world.

If we select your material for publication you are free to have it published elsewhere after it has first been published by us, provided that any subsequent publication of the material credits *The Big Issue* using the words "first published by *The Big Issue* Australia", or words to that effect, with reasonable prominence.

Also, we won't accept stories that have been submitted as part of assessment for any kind of journalism course, unless everyone interviewed for the piece is expressly forewarned that what they have told you may be published.



STORY LENGTH & PAY RATES

Feature stories generally run between 850–1800 words (and most commonly are two-page spreads of approx 850 words), columns are around 600 words, and one-page pieces are usually 700–750 words. Regular sections have specific word counts (see below).

Because we are a charitable organisation, we are unable to offer commercial pay rates. Our usual rate of pay for features and news stories is 20 cents a word. We don't guarantee payment until the piece is published, and payment is made according to the price agreed upon at the time it is commissioned.

Payment for film, book, DVD and CD reviews is a flat rate of \$30. The review sections are coordinated by section editors. Do not submit reviews except at their request.

ARTWORK

The Big Issue uses a range of photography, illustrations and other artwork throughout the magazine. Artwork is generally commissioned specifically for each story. If you would like to have your work considered, please email your contact details and samples of your work – or a link to work online – to editorial@bigissue.org.au.

ROYALTIES

Where *The Big Issue* (or a part of it) is reproduced by a third party, we may receive small payments (royalties) from Copyright Agency Limited (CAL), which collects and distributes royalties payable by the third party for that reproduction. You may be entitled to a share of these royalties if your article is reproduced. However, by submitting material for publication in *The Big Issue* you agree that we may retain any royalties we may receive on your behalf for use at our discretion. As a contributor, it is in your best interests to register with CAL to receive directly any royalties which are payable to you.

COPYRIGHT AND OTHER THIRD PARTY RIGHTS

You warrant to us that you are the author of the material you submit to us and that you are the owner of, or otherwise entitled to exercise, the copyright in the material that you submit to us for publication. You warrant that our publication of the material will not infringe any third-party rights.

By submitting your material you agree that at any time we may, or we may authorise third parties to, publish, reproduce, modify and edit your material for the purpose of publication in *The Big Issue* (in hard copy, on our website or in any other medium).

You also agree that we may, or we may authorise third parties (such as the State Library of Victoria) to, archive and store your material for whatever period of time we determine.

You consent to our use of your material in this manner even if such use would otherwise infringe your moral rights.

SUBMITTING YOUR STORY

Please email your story as a Word attachment and as a back-up also pasted within the text of the email (editorial@bigissue.org.au). And don't forget to include your full name and contact details (preferably a telephone number). Please note that all freelance contributors are required by law to provide us with an ABN or a completed 'Statement by Supplier' form. If you need more details about your tax status, please visit the Australian Tax Office website, ato.gov.au.

STREET SHEET CONTRIBUTIONS

The 'Streetsheet' page is intended to offer a voice people from the margins – and it is part of what makes *The Big Issue* unique. Contributors are primarily *Big Issue* vendors and people who have been involved in Big Issue programs (such as the Community Street Soccer Program and community writing workshops). But we also encourage Streetsheet contributions from anyone who has experienced homelessness, long-term unemployment, disability or displacement.

Streetsheet submissions should be **no longer than 150 words for poems and 250 for prose pieces**. It's important to meet the word lengths, as space is tight. *Big Issue* vendors should ensure that their bank details are registered at their local Big Issue HQ. Other contributors should ensure that either their contact details (or the contact details of their referring agency or case worker) are included, along with relevant payment details (such as bank account details) etc.

Streetsheet contributions can be emailed, mailed or faxed. Please ensure your name and contact details are clearly visible. As Streetsheet contributions may also be reused on the website or other Big Issue publications. If you need to clarify any details about the use of Streetsheet contributions, please contact editorial@bigissue.org.au.

WORD COUNTS

FEATURES

One pager – 600 words
(sometimes 750 if book, music or film feature)

Two pager – 850 words
(if accompanied by a photo or illustration)

Three pager – 1200 to 1300 words

Four pager – 1600 words

Roving Eye – 400 to 450 words

OTHER

Ointment – 150 to 200 words

My Word – Roughly 750 words

Your Say – 100 words

Streetsheet – 150 words (poems)
– 250 words (prose pieces)

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES

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